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ANNUAL

ADDRESS TO THE STUDENTS

OF THE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

OF THE

FIRST A. R. SYNOD OF THE WEST,

AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION,

NOVEMBER 7th, 1842.

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BY

JOHN T. PRESSLY, D. D.

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ADDRESS.

My Dear Young Friends:

Once more, at the opening of the session, it becomes my melancholy duty to record the entrance of death into our little circle. At the commencement of our last term, John Walker was with us, in the enjoyment of vigorous health, and with as fair a prospect of long life, as any of us. Now his seat is vacant, and he sleeps in the silent tomb. Endowed with vigorous powers of mind; patient, persevering and indefatigable in the pursuit of knowledge, and deeply imbued, as we trust, with the spirit of piety, he bid fair to be an active and efficient laborer in the vineyard of the Lord. But he, whose ways are not as our ways, does not always employ in building up Zion, those whom human wisdom would select as the most suitable instruments. Our friend is gone! And, in his removal, death has come very near to us! And it well becomes us all, duly to consider the admonition which God addresses to us in his word, and enforces by this solemn dispensation. "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh."

The painful event to which I have just adverted, naturally directs our thoughts to the future world, and renders it peculiarly appropriate, to inquire into the

condition of man beyond the grave. What is man's destiny, after life's pilgrimage shall have been ended, is a question of the deepest personal concern to every individual. The period of his continuance in this world, is short. After a few days of toil, of disappointment, of anxiety and of care, he goes the way whence he shall not return. And when his nobler part, the immortal soul, takes its departure from this tabernacle of clay, whither does it go? Does it then bid a final adieu, even to that little enjoyment of which it was a partaker in this vale of tears, to dwell forever with devouring flames? Or, freed from sin and sorrow, does it receive a welcome to God's blissful presence, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore? These, my friends, are momentous questions; and it is a matter of personal concern with every son and daughter of Adam, to be prepared to give such an answer as will stand the test of the final day. It is indeed true, that there is a system of doctrine, and one that claims the sanction of God's word, which would quiet the anxiety of the human breast, in relation to futurity, by excluding altogether the idea of future punishment. We have, on a former occasion, called your attention to the scriptural argument in support of the doctrine, that the finally impenitent will experience, in the future world, the just punishment of their sin. And it will surely be admitted, by every candid mind, that the scriptures, according to the plain and natural import of language, seem to lead us to the conclusion, that it shall be ill with the wicked in the future world. It is conceded, however, that there are declarations of scripture, which, if taken in an isolated form, without

regarding the design of the sacred writers, might seem to countenance the doctrine of universal salvation; and on these, men have founded plausible objections against our conclusion. Some of these we now propose to examine.

1. In the first place, it is objected, that according to the scriptures, the death of Christ, was designed to effect the redemption of the whole human family. And it is hence argued, that as our Lord Jesus Christ certainly accomplished what he undertook, the salvation of the whole human family must be the result. This objection is the more imposing, because it professes respect for the character and work of the Son of God.

This objection, it is believed, is founded upon a false assumption. It takes for granted that Jesus Christ, by his death, hath made atonement for the sins of every individual of the human race. And the conclusion which is drawn from this assumption is, that the final salvation of all, is infallibly secured. For our own part we are free to admit, that if the truth of the assumption be granted, the conclusion is unavoidable. Whatever was the purpose of the Godhead, in relation to the death of Jesus Christ, will certainly be accomplished. This must be admitted, or we set limits to almighty power, and attribute imperfection to Him, whose counsel shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure. If the design of the Father, in delivering up his own Son to death, and the purpose of the Son of God, in laying down his life, was to redeem every son and daughter of Adam from sin and wrath, that purpose will certainly be accomplished. But do the scriptures teach that such was the design, which the Godhead proposed to accomplish by the mediation of Jesus Christ?

It is admitted that there are declarations of scripture, which if taken by themselves, without reference to the design of the sacred writers, and without comparing them with other plain and explicit passages of the word of God, might seem to justify an affirmative answer. But if we adopt a principle of interpretation, which would make the scriptures consistent with themselves, and compare spiritual things with spiritual, a negative reply must be returned.

What we believe to be the scriptural view of the atonement of Jesus, we shall endeavor to present in few words.

(1.) Jesus Christ, by his death, has made an atonement for sin, which is of infinite value; and therefore, in itself, sufficient for the salvation of all men. He who died for our sin, in human nature, is a divine person. And therefore, the church is said to be purchased with the blood of God. "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* Having made such an atonement for sin, he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him. If, then, all men are not eventually saved, it does not result from any deficiency in the merit of the atonement.

(2.) But, whatever may be the intrinsic value of the atonement, it was made according to the purpose of the Godhead, for those whom the Father gave to the Son. In relation to these, our Lord himself declares, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."† They are likewise denominated his sheep, and they are described as those who hear his voice and follow

* Acts 20 : 28. † John 6 : 37 and 10 ; 11.

him. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." To this portion of the human family, he sustains the relation of a substitute. And hence he is represented as bearing their sins in his own body on the tree; and as giving his life a ransom for them. According to the natural and obvious import of the term, if the Lord Jesus Christ surrendered his life as a *ransom* for those whom the Father gave to him, and if the ransom was accepted by the Father, their deliverance from sin and wrath is infallibly secured. And hence, they are represented as a "peculiar people,"—a "people for possession,"—whom God has purchased for himself. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot."*

Before we enter upon the examination of particular passages of scripture, it may be remarked, that it is common with all writers to employ universal terms in a general, but limited sense. And therefore, these terms must be interpreted in accordance with the nature of the subject, and the design of the writer. Many examples of this kind are to be found in the sacred scriptures. "There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." "Then went out," to attend upon the ministry of John the Baptist, "Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan." The Pharisees, vexed and mortified to witness the popularity of Jesus of Nazareth, among the common people, "said among themselves, perceive ye, how ye prevail nothing? behold, *the world*

* 1 Peter 1: 18.

is gone after him.". It was to the Apostle, the cause of thanksgiving to God, that the faith of the Roman converts, was "spoken of *throughout the whole world.*" To the Colossians it is said, "the gospel is come unto you, as it is *in all the world.*"* It would be easy to add to the number of these examples, but it is not necessary. And in all these instances it is perfectly manifest, that the universal expressions, "the world," "the whole world," "all the world," must be understood in a qualified sense. It is consequently, disingenuous and unfair, to represent us as violating any correct principle of interpretation, when we impose a restriction upon the import of universal terms, which the nature of the subject, and the design of the sacred writers, absolutely require.

Among the various passages of scripture, which have been supposed to favor the doctrine of an indefinite atonement, a few of the most prominent shall be examined.

"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. 15 : 22. From these words of the Apostle, it is argued, that the word *all*, in the one clause of the verse, must include the same persons who are comprehended in the term *all*, in the other. But, it is admitted that in the first clause, the "*all*" who die in Adam, include the whole human family. Therefore, those who are made alive in Christ, comprehend the whole posterity of Adam. But to this reasoning I object, that the assumption with which it sets out, takes for granted, what is denied and cannot be proved. The Apostle speaks of all who are "in Adam," and of

* Luke 2 : 1. Mat. 3 : 3. John 12 : 19. Rom. 1 : 8. Col. 1 : 6.

all who are "in Christ;" but he does not say that these are the same persons. All who are "in Adam," inherit from him death, and all who are "in Christ," derive from him life. But who are in Adam, and who are in Christ? To every individual of the one class, death descends from Adam, and to every individual of the other class, life is communicated by our Lord Jesus Christ. But the Apostle does not teach that these two classes comprehend precisely the same persons.

The language of the Apostle presents Christ and Adam to our view, in the light of two public persons, who sustain to certain individuals a peculiar relation. Adam, as a public person, or moral head of a great system, sustains to all his offspring the relation of a representative. By virtue of this relation, he and his offspring constitute one moral body. He is the head, and they are the members. And the consequence of this relation is, that all his offspring "sinned in him and fell with him." *In Adam all die.* Jesus Christ, who is styled the second Adam, is likewise a public person, who sustains to all his seed, the relation of a representative. But who are his seed? The scriptures very plainly teach, that they are a peculiar people. In the language of the evangelical prophet, it is said, "He shall see his seed; he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." With regard to them, our Lord in his prayer to the Father, declares, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast

given me; for they are thine." These persons are elsewhere described as the "election of grace;" as those who have been "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy." Those who are in Christ, then, are not the very same persons who are in Adam. Both these distinguished individuals sustain the relation of a representative to their respective seed. The seed of Adam, are his natural offspring. The seed of Christ, are his spiritual offspring, who by virtue of their union to him are made partakers of a new nature. And they include not the world, but those given to Christ out of the world. They compose a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues. They are those who having "come out of great tribulation, and having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, shall stand before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." All those who compose this numerous and glorious assembly, constitute the spiritual seed of him who is the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, and in him they shall all be made alive.

But, though death in its comprehensive sense descends from Adam, their moral as well as natural head, to all his offspring; and though all that is included in the term life, is derived to them who are in Christ, from him who is their spiritual and moral head; yet, it is

particularly of that life of which believers are made partakers in the resurrection, that the Apostle here speaks. The resurrection of the body, is the subject of the chapter in which the words under consideration are found. In the verse immediately preceding, the Apostle says,—"Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." As the first man Adam, brought sin and death into the world, so, the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, has destroyed death, and has secured for his people the resurrection from the dead. His resurrection is both an example and pledge of the resurrection of his redeemed. Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. Therefore, the certain and the consolatory conclusion is, all those who are in Christ shall be made alive in the resurrection, and shall be exalted to honor and glory and immortality.

The phrase, *in Christ*, is indicative of that peculiar relation which exists between the Lord Jesus Christ and all true believers, who are the members of that moral body of which he is the Head. Hence it is said, "If any man be *in Christ*, he is a new creature." Speaking of some of his kinsmen, who had been turned from sin unto God before he had become a disciple of Christ, the Apostle says, "who were *in Christ* before me."* The doctrine, then, which is taught in the words under consideration, is, that "in Adam," all his posterity, who constitute that moral body of which he is the head, *die;* and in Christ, all his seed, that is, all true believers who are in him, shall be made partakers of a glorious resurrection. It is true, that the ungodly shall

*2 Cor. 5 : 17. Romans 16 : 7.

also rise: but they shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt. Their resurrection will not be to them a blessing; nor is it of the resurrection of such that the Apostle here speaks. It is of those to whom the Lord Jesus sustains the relation of the "first fruits;" of those "who are Christ's," who shall be changed and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, and shall be ever with the Lord.

Another passage of scripture which is adduced in support of the doctrine of universal salvation, is found in Heb. 2:9: "That he, by the grace of God, should taste death for *every man*." It may be proper to inform the English reader, that the word *man*, is a supplement of the translators, for which there is no corresponding term in the original. The passage literally rendered, would read, That he, by the grace of God, should taste death for *every one*, or for *all*. Since, then, some word must be supplied to complete the sense, the question arises, "For all whom, did Christ taste death?" The context must furnish the answer. Of whom is the Apostle speaking? For every one of them, did Christ taste death. The very next verse furnishes an answer. The Captain of salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings, is represented as "bringing many sons unto glory." And for all of these many sons, to whom he sustains the relation of the Captain of their salvation, and whom he is conducting to glory, did he suffer death, and thereby expiated their sin and obtained for them eternal redemption.

These words, then, when taken in their connection, prove that the Lord Jesus suffered death for all those sons whom he is leading to glory, but give no counte-

nance to the doctrine of an indefinite atonement, and afford no support to the doctrine of universal salvation.

It is further argued, that there are other passages of scripture, which represent the death of Christ as having respect to the whole world; and hence it is inferred, that the salvation of the whole human family is secured. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world."* "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."† From these and similar passages of scripture, it is argued, that the death of Christ had respect to the world, to all men alike; and therefore, that all must eventually be saved. To this I reply, that we must interpret the word of God, so that it shall be consistent with itself. Since, therefore, our Lord himself has particularly declared, that he laid down his life for the *sheep;* that he loved the *church*, and gave himself for it; and that he prays not for the world, but for them whom the Father had given him out of the world, the conclusion is irresistible, that the design of his death was particular and definite. And, we must therefore interpret the general and indefinite expressions on this subject, by those which are particular and definite. Indefinite terms are employed, by all writers, in a limited sense; while particular and definite terms cannot be used in an unlimited acceptation. It remains, therefore, to inquire, whether there are not circumstances connected with the universal terms under consideration, which impose a restriction upon their import, and clearly show that they are not to be understood in an unqualified sense.

* 1 John 2: 1,2. † John 1: 29.

1. To this inquiry, I remark, that one particular object of the sacred writers, in using such general terms, was to correct a prevalent error. The writers of the New Testament were Jews. The people of this nation had long regarded themselves as the peculiar favorites of heaven, and the opinion had become prevalent, that the blessings of salvation were to be confined to them, and that the only way in which the Gentiles could be received into divine favor, was by becoming Jews. These views doubtless had their origin in the fact, that God, in the exercise of his sovereignty, had taken the descendants of Abraham into a peculiar relation to himself as his people, while the nations around them had been left to walk in the vanity of their minds. And though their own prophets had predicted, that under the reign of Messiah, the blessings of salvation should take a wider range; that "the mountain of the Lord's house should be established in the top of the mountains, and should be exalted above the hills, and that all nations should flow into it;" yet such was their national pride, and such was their contempt for the nations around, that they were slow to admit the doctrine that the Gentiles could be admitted to the enjoyment of the blessings of Messiah's kingdom, on the same terms with themselves. And hence, to correct this pernicious error, the writers of the New Testament are very particular in stating that Jesus Christ is the Savior, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles; not of one nation only, but the common Savior of the world. Though the promise of the Messiah was made to their illustrious progenitor; and though, as pertaining to the flesh, he was a descendant of Abraham, yet

at the very time the promise was given to the Father of the faithful, it was announced that the Messiah should be a source of blessing to the nations. "In thy seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed." And accordingly, his illustrious harbinger directs the attention of the expecting Jews to Jesus of Nazareth, in these significant words: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Behold him, of whom "Moses in the law and the prophets did write;" who, by his death, shall make atonement, not for one nation, but for the world; not for the Jews only, but also for the Gentiles. The design of such language, is not to specify particularly the individuals for whom the Savior was to make atonement, but to correct the false views of the Jews, who were disposed to appropriate to themselves the blessings of Messiah's reign. You are mistaken, says John the Baptist,—than whom a greater prophet had not risen among them that are born of woman,—your views are radically wrong, ye sons of Abraham! The Messiah promised unto the fathers, is the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin not of the Jews only, but of the world.

2. The terms which the sacred writers employ in relation to the death of Christ, likewise prove that the design of our Lord and Savior, in laying down his life, was definite and particular. For example: The scriptures represent our Lord as laying down his life as a *ransom* for his people. "The Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."* A ransom is a price paid for the redemption of a captive. It is supposed that

* Matthew 20:28.

the heirs of salvation were in a state of spiritual bondage under sin and satan. And, as the price of their redemption from spiritual bondage, Jesus Christ laid down his life as a ransom. A wise man would not surrender his life upon an uncertainty. And it is certain, that when the Son of God submitted to the cruel and ignominious death of the cross, he had a definite object in view. And it is equally certain, that he did not fail to accomplish that object. And what that particular object was, we learn from explicit declarations of scripture. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word." "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." It was then for his church,—for his sheep,—that he laid down his life as a ransom. And the ransom being paid and accepted, their deliverance is the certain consequence.

But will it be objected, that the Apostle represents the Redeemer as giving himself "a ransom for all?"* I reply, that the extent of such general terms must be determined by the definite terms which are applied to the same subject. And it ought to be particularly observed, that these words are found in connection with an exhortation to pray for all classes of men, and particularly for those who are in authority. And as a reason enforcing this exhortation it is added, that Christ gave his life a "ransom for all." That is, he died not for any one particular nation, nor for any one particular class of men, but for sinners of the human family, in every nation under heaven; and for men in all the

* 1 Timothy 2:6.

diversified conditions of human life, whether rulers or subjects, whether rich or poor, whether bond or free. His life was in itself, a ransom of sufficient value for the redemption of all men; the benefit of this ransom is offered freely unto all; and, as the final result, a great multitude of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues, shall be redeemed from sin and wrath.

Again: The death of Christ is represented under the idea of a *propitiation* or *atonement.* Both these terms suppose the existence of a state of enmity. By reason of sin, man's heart is alienated from God, and the divine displeasure is excited against him. The Lord Jesus Christ, by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, hath endured in our stead the curse of the violated law. He was made under the law and was made a curse for us. And thus the cause of the divine displeasure against man was removed, and a reconciliation between offending sinners and offended heaven, has been effected. The terms propitiation and atonement, then, convey the idea, that friendship has been established between God and man. And consequently, Jesus Christ is the propitiation for those between whom and God, a state of friendship is established; or, in other words, for all true believers. And the Apostle adds, not for our sins only; not for the sins of us Jews only, but for the sins of all those throughout the whole world, who accept the offered salvation.

In concluding the scriptural argument, then, we feel justified in saying, that the scriptures teach plainly and explicitly, that the finally impenitent shall be punished for their sin in the future world; and this doctrine is so particularly and expressly taught in many passages of

scripture, that it cannot be explained away, without offering violence to the plainest principles of interpretation. And though it is admitted that there are some passages of scripture which, from a superficial view, might seem to countenance the doctrine of universal salvation; yet when examined in their connection, and with reference to the design of the sacred writers, they admit of an easy and natural interpretation, according to which they do not, in any degree, militate against the doctrine, which is elsewhere taught as plainly as language can express it.

But, in addition to the argument founded upon express declarations of scripture, which clearly establish the doctrine of the future punishment of sin, I observe, that,—

The direct tendency of the doctrine of universal salvation, to encourage wicked men to live in sin, proves that it is not a doctrine according to godliness. It is not only a truth clearly taught in the sacred scriptures, but abundantly confirmed by experience and observation, that the heart of man is alienated from God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The consequence of this alienation of heart from God, is, that man is utterly averse to the service of God, and finds his enjoyment in the pleasures of sin. You may exhibit to his view the beauty of holiness and the excellency of virtue; you may describe the great advantages of a life of piety, and may tell him that the way of transgressors is hard. But sin has blinded his understanding, and the truth is perceived but imperfectly, while all the feelings of the heart are aroused against it. The fear of the unhappy consequences of a sinful

course, often operates with powerful influence, in restraining men from evil and in exciting them to the practice of virtue. But remove the barrier which the fear of future punishment places in the way of human depravity; assure man that he may live in sin without any apprehension of punishment in the world to come, and the depraved heart is at once prepared to practice iniquity with greediness. You may tell sinful man, that sin produces the fruits of bitterness in the present life; that even if we should confine our view to the life that now is, it is true that the way of transgressors is hard. But in the estimation of the depraved heart, which is under the influence of the love of sin, the enjoyment found in the pleasures of sin, more than counterbalances the present evil connected with criminal indulgences. If, then, you satisfy the man who hates God and holiness, and loves sin, that whatever may be the evils resulting from a sinful course, in the present life, he has nothing to fear in relation to the future, he is prepared to give a loose rein to the gratification of every sinful propensity, and to rush forward without concern in the practice of iniquity.

And what, I would ask, is the practical effect of the doctrine of universal salvation, where it prevails in any community? I appeal to the sober reflection of all intelligent men, who have had the opportunity of making observation. Does not the prevalence of this doctrine, exert an influence directly unfavorable to practical piety? When an advocate of the doctrine of universal salvation, makes his appearance in a village or city, what is the general character of those who flock to his ministry? Do not the irreligious, the profane, and the intemperate, usually constitute the majority?

And who ever heard of such men being reclaimed, under the preaching of universal salvation? Who ever heard of sinners being awakened and convinced, and brought to cry out, under the influence of such preaching, What must we do to be saved? No! The influence of this doctrine upon man, depraved as he is, is to harden the heart in sin, to banish fear from the mind, and to lull the conscience asleep in a state of fatal security. The tendency then, I repeat it, which this doctrine has to defeat the design of the gospel, which is to turn men from sin unto God, proves that it cannot be a doctrine of the gospel.

In conclusion, it may be proper to notice briefly some of the popular objections to the doctrine of future punishment.

1. It is urged as an objection against the doctrine of the future and everlasting punishment of sin, that there is no proportion between the demerit of sin and everlasting misery. Sin is the act of a finite creature, committed in the present limited state of existence; and to suppose that it is to be punished forever in a future state, is to mete out to it a punishment beyond its desert. To this objection I reply, that it is presumption on the part of man, to undertake to determine what is the desert of sin, and what is the amount of punishment which it deserves. Man is the transgressor, and it is not for him to say what is the punishment which his sin deserves. It is natural for him to think lightly of his sin, and to conclude that it should be punished but lightly. But it is not the province of the guilty, to determine what is the desert of their crime, nor what shall be the amount of their punishment. This belongs to the Lawgiver. And it is for us to ascertain what is

the will of the eternal Lawgiver: he only, knows what is due to the honor of his own law; and to him exclusively, does it belong to determine what expression of his abhorrence of sin is necessary, for the purpose of vindicating his own honor, and of securing the stability of his own government. All that we have to do in relation to this matter, is, to come to his word and learn what is his will. And there we find it explicitly declared, that "the wages of sin is DEATH." He, who perfectly understands the nature of sin, and who knows what is due to the majesty and dignity of his own law, has determined, that all that is included in that fearful word *death*, is the just desert of sin.

And to impress the mind of man more deeply with a sense of the malignity of sin, and the infinite abhorrence with which the moral Governor of the world regards it, God has not only declared in his word, what is its desert, but in his providence he has, by terrible judgments inflicted upon men for their sin, manifested that sin is that abominable thing which he hates, and which the glory of his perfections and the honor of his law require, that he should punish. Witness the deluge that was brought upon the world, as a testimony of the divine displeasure against the wickedness of man. Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation; and Noah walked with God. He found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and his family were preserved from the general calamity. But with regard to the rest of the human family it is said, that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And, therefore, it was determined, that with the exception of Noah's family, man should be destroyed from the face of the earth. "And

God said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." To this example, we may add the awful calamity which befel the once flourishing and populous cities of Sodom and of the plain. The sin of the inhabitants of these cities was "very grievous." And as a manifestation of the righteous displeasure of God against their abhorrent wickedness, "The Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." From these and similar examples in the history of God's providence, we may see in what light God regards sin, and may form an estimate of the punishment which, sooner or later, awaits it.

But will it be said, that though these judgments were sent as an expression of the divine displeasure against sin, they were at the same time sent in mercy to these sinners, and as the means of bringing them to repentance and of preparing them for heaven? I reply, that such a supposition, is entirely a gratuitous assumption, not only unsupported by the sacred history, but utterly irreconcilable with the language of scripture. Those sons of violence, whose wickedness was great in the earth, on whom the flood descended, were not chastised for their improvement. But having abused the mercy and forbearance of God, who waited long with them, and having despised his warnings, *they were destroyed.* "God spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly."*

* 2 Peter 2 : 5.

These impious men were intent upon their own pleasures: "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and *destroyed them all.*" And similar was the fate of the men of Sodom, who were sinners before the Lord exceedingly." They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and *destroyed them all.*" And instead of any intimation, that the awful calamity which overtook the inhabitants of these devoted cities, was a parental chastisement sent for their benefit, it is expressly said, that they are "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."*

But a still more emphatical exhibition of the divine displeasure against sin, and of God's unalterable determination to punish it, we have in the sufferings and death of the Son of God. When he appeared on earth in the character of our substitute, and bore our sins in his own body, it pleased the Lord to bruise him. Such was the intensity of his suffering, that he exclaims, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels." To his disciples he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And while his humanity contemplated the bitter cup which he was about to drink, he prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." "And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Now consider the divine dignity and glory of the sufferer.

* Jude 7.

He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. He is God over all, blessed for ever. And why could not that cup of bitterness pass from him? Why was it the divine pleasure to bruise him and to put him to grief? He was the Father's well-beloved Son, and was always his delight. Why then was the command issued,—"Awake, O Sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts?" It was because he was made sin for us. Therefore, he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities. And in the unparalleled sufferings of the Son of God, for our sin, a most solemn and expressive exhibition was made to the intelligent universe, of the demerit of sin, and of the righteous determination of Jehovah to punish it. And did the Lord of glory thus suffer for sin? Then, let none presume to say, that any amount of suffering is too great a punishment for the sin of those who despise and reject that salvation which the Redeemer has purchased by his blood.

2. It is objected further, that the future everlasting punishment of the impenitent, is irreconcilable with the infinite benevolence of God. "God is love." He is a kind and compassionate Father; he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. And how, it is inquired, can this scriptural character of God be reconciled with the doctrine of the future everlasting punishment of sin? To this I reply, that it is not only admitted, but it is the source of all our hopes, that He with whom we have to do, is a being of infinite benevolence. He has not only revealed himself in his word, as the God of love, but in his dispensations of providence, and especially in the gift of his Son, he has

given abundant evidence of his love. But it is an indisputable fact, that under the government of God, there is a great amount of suffering, and wretchedness, and misery, experienced by man. And hence it follows, that the existence of human misery, is not inconsistent with the benevolence of God. God is love; and yet it is a matter of experience and observation, that sinful men, in the present life, receive much evil at his hand. The same objection, therefore, lies against what we now see to be a fact in the divine administration, which is urged against the doctrine of future punishment. The difference in degree, between the sufferings of the wicked in this life and their punishment in the future world, does not affect the principle. If the one is inconsistent with the infinite benevolence of God, so is the other.

The objection we are considering, has its origin in contracted and erroneous views of the divine character. God sustains to the human family, it is true, the relation of a Father. And, as a Father, he is good unto all, and dispenses his bounty with a liberal hand. He maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. But he also sustains to his rational creatures, the relation of a Lawgiver, and Sovereign, and Judge. He has given to them a law which is holy and just and good; and has promised his favor to obedience to that law, while his wrath is revealed against disobedience. As a Sovereign, he rules in righteousness; and as a Judge, he is just, and will render unto all, that which is their due. Justice and holiness and truth, are essential attributes of the divine nature, as well as mercy and love.

Between these perfections of the divine nature, there is no inconsistency: he does not cease to be good when he exercises justice, nor does he lose sight of mercy when he manifests his holiness in the punishment of sin. In the gospel, God reveals himself as the Father of mercies; he declares that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; he warns, invites and entreats, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye; why will you die?" To prevail upon them to turn from their rebellious course, he presents himself in the attitude of a fond father, who welcomes the return of a lost son; who runs to meet him and receives him in his arms. And to those of our rebellious race, who hearken to his kind invitation, he says, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." With such, from this time forth, he dealeth as with sons. Sometimes indeed, he finds it necessary to chastise them for their faults. But his language to them, even when his hand is lifted up for their correction, is, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"* Such is the manner in which God deals with those who hear his voice, renounce their connection with a rebellious world and become his obedient and dutiful children.

But there are others who, when the God of salvation calls, refuse to hearken; when he stretches out his

* Hebrews 12 : 5—7.

hand to help them, they will not regard; they set at nought all his counsel, and they contemn his reproof. These are not the children of his grace; they are rebels against his authority. With them, God dealeth not as with sons. To them, he sustains the relation of a righteous Judge and Sovereign. And to them who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, he manifests himself in the character of Judge of all the earth, who will do right. And in the view of the holy intelligent universe, he appears infinitely glorious, in awarding to every soul of man that doeth evil, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."*

To deliver sinful men from this fearful condemnation, and to prepare them for honor and glory and immortal blessedness, is the benevolent design of the gospel. And you, my young friends, by your appearance in this place, declare that you have devoted yourselves to the service of God, and of his church; and that your desire is to prepare for the work of preaching to a perishing world, the unsearchable riches of Christ. And in view of the honor conferred upon him, in calling him to this work, did the great Apostle of the Gentiles exclaim, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given,"—how deeply should we feel our unworthiness! And did that same Apostle, when contemplating the solemn responsibility involved in the sacred office, exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?"—how should our souls be penetrated

* Psalm 11 : 6.

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with an humbling sense of our insufficiency! See to it then, my young friends, that you yourselves have come to the Savior, and have voluntarily taken his yoke upon you. Examine carefully, and see whether, when your Master comes to you with the searching inquiry, "Lovest thou me?" you are prepared to reply, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." While engaged in the study of divine things, place yourselves at the feet of Jesus, and with the humility and docility of children, learn of him. Commune much with your own hearts. Search the Scriptures daily, diligently, and prayerfully. Cultivate much familiarity with the throne of grace. Meditate upon these things; give yourselves wholly to them, that your profiting may appear to all. And may God, in the riches of his grace, make you all, men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. And, after being made the honored instruments of turning many to righteousness, may you shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, for ever and ever.—AMEN.